

## BALKAN REPORT III

# The Six-Bradley Scout Platoon In Bosnia

by First Lieutenant Frank Lozano

*This article is the third to appear in the last three issues discussing mobility in Bosnia.* - Ed.



Bradleys at a Bosnia checkpoint.

The three-Bradley scout section moves through the narrow back roads connecting the many Bosnian villages that line the Zone of Separation (ZOS). It is mid-afternoon, and the mounted patrol is about to link up with the Serbian engineers who will provide security and ensure the destruction of the Serb bunkers along the confrontation line. The morning had been spent with elements of the Bosnian Army as they removed mines and marked minefields. The section would return to "Ft. Apache" (Lodgment Area Walker) around 1700, with enough time to grab chow, ensure the other section's readiness for its night patrol, and prepare for the nightly mission brief.

The evening would be spent executing the necessary troop leading procedures and pre-combat inspections, ensuring their readiness for the next day's mission. Once that was complete, then would come the showers, a little AFN, maybe a movie, exercise, and the other amenities provided by the 1st Armored Division.

### Scout Platoon

The many differing missions of Operation Joint Endeavor make a six-Bradley scout platoon a valuable asset. There has been much discussion on which vehicle is the best for use in a peacekeeping environment. [See *ARMOR*, July/August 96 for one such discussion. - Ed.] In making this decision, we must take into account the task organization of the vehicles. This issue can be examined by focusing on the three main missions that ground forces execute in the other than war environment in which we are currently deployed. They are mounted patrols,

lodgment area security, and checkpoint operations.

### Mounted Patrols

The peacekeepers conduct daily day and night patrols in and around the ZOS. The M3A2 is well suited for this mission for a number of different reasons, but one of the most important is its maneuverability. The narrow roads of Bosnia act as very restrictive terrain. The width of the M3A2 CFV (3.61 meters) allows it to move through the country much more easily than an M1A1 (3.65 meters width). When compared to the M113 series, the CFV's ability to pivot steer makes it more agile in areas where it is important to stay on the cleared route. Another formidable obstacle is the country's great number of reckless drivers. The M3A2 is narrow enough to allow traffic to move in both directions and safely pass. This aids the M3A2 in performing its neighborhood patrols while displaying a large, visible deterrent.

The M3A2, more so than a HMMWV or an M113, is a very imposing fighting machine. In an environment where only force is respected, the M3A2 easily fits the role. One of the factors that makes the CFV such an intimidating vehicle is visibility of its three turret-mounted weapons systems. The easily seen 25mm, TOW launcher, and coax provide a much more visible deterrent than the single crew-served weapons mounted on both the HMMWV and M113.

The size of the unit also makes the scout platoon a valuable asset. Since physical work is often done with the factional elements, dismounted security is vital. This characteristic makes the

scout platoon more able to conduct these missions, unlike the tank platoon, which is unable to provide both sufficient dismounted security and the ability to fight their vehicles at the same time. Also, one cannot overlook the survivability advantage, both for the crew and the vehicle. The amount of armor protection provided by the M3A2 provides enhanced crew protection, and acts as a visible deterrent, especially to those who are quicker to throw rocks at HMMWVs than Bradleys when denied candy or an MRE.

A good example of the CFV's durability was shown when the platoon leader's Bradley in 3/B/1-1 Cavalry ran over an AP mine. The mine, which would have ruined the mobility of a HMMWV, inflicted no damage to the Bradley.

### Lodgment Area Security

The size of the unit, in both soldiers and vehicles, allows the six-Bradley scout platoon to execute a number of different missions at once. For example, the platoon is able to run an efficient guard roster while conducting intensive vehicle maintenance. The platoon is also able to make good use of the time back at the lodgment area by maximizing personnel recovery while conducting concurrent training.

The lodgment areas in theater are small and restrictive in regard to motor pool space. This requires a vehicle that not only can move quickly, but one narrow enough to maneuver through the lodgment areas. This gives the commander the flexibility to either move one or all of his Bradleys to cover any disturbance. The biggest advantage of having an M3A2 comes in

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the form of available weapons systems. Since most lodgment areas are in built-up areas, there are a number of different threats. The M240 coax machine gun is excellent for taking care of any close dismounted or POV-mounted threat, while the 25mm HE or AP deals with any medium range threat. The 25mm chain gun is an outstanding weapon for built-up areas. It is both accurate and destructive. The ability to minimize collateral damage is a key factor in peacekeeping operations. The TOW, able to make the long range kill, is great for covering the many roads that are near the lodgment areas. Used properly, the M3A2 becomes an effectively lethal weapon for lodgment area security.

### Checkpoint Operations

Here again, the number of people and vehicles available in the six-Bradley platoon aid in the efficient manning of checkpoints. There are enough people to conduct vehicle and weapons maintenance, concurrent training, and checkpoint improvement, as well as allowing for a quick reaction force. The preferred approach is to occupy a checkpoint with an entire platoon, but that is not always possible. With the six-Bradley scout platoon, the commander has the flexibility to man two checkpoints at the same time.

The M3A2 proves its worth during checkpoint operations by superbly fulfilling all of the necessary requirements. The restrictive terrain, coupled with the small areas of land that are cleared of mines, creates cramped checkpoints with little room to maneuver vehicles. The CFV is narrow and quick enough to react to any disturbance. Since most checkpoints are set up in the center of the ZOS, it is important that they portray a formidable, as well as intimidating, presence. The M3A2 is again preferable in this role to either the HMMWV or M113. As noted previously, the weapons systems and armor protection play a large factor as a visible deterrent.

Along with these characteristics, another important factor is the optics of the M3A2. On a checkpoint where 24-hour observation is key, good optics are vital. Since checkpoints are generally

set up in open areas, with good observation and fields of fire, the platoon's ability to defend itself is important. The optics of the M3A2 allow for continual observation of the surrounding dominating terrain and built-up areas. Although HMMWVs and M113-series vehicles can be outfitted with good optical systems, they are not standard on these vehicles.

There are many characteristics of the M3A2 CFV that make it well-suited for peacekeeping operations. There is no vehicle that is completely suited for all aspects of peacekeeping, and it does, of course, take the proper integration of all available assets to successfully accomplish the many missions of Operation Joint Endeavor. I do not doubt that even though the M3A2 alone is an intimidating factor in the ZOS, the local factions as well as the lurking troublemakers are also well aware of the M1A1 QRF platoon positioned a few miles down the road. They are also aware of the artillery battery prepositioned a few more miles away. It is my opinion that the M3A2's ability to integrate maneuverability and survivability, its visible array of lethal weapons, and its superior optics make it a superb vehicle for peacekeeping operations. When the Bradley is organized into a six-vehicle scout platoon configuration, it becomes a very valuable asset to the commander who must execute a variety of peacekeeping missions. It has proven its worth traveling thousands of patrol miles over the narrow roads of Bosnia-Herzegovina and will continue to do so for the duration of our mission.

First Lieutenant Frank Lozano was commissioned in Armor in 1993 as a Distinguished Military Graduate from Texas A&M University. A graduate of AOBC and SPLC, he has served as a tank platoon leader and scout platoon leader. He is currently executive officer of Troop A, 1-1 Cavalry, at Lodgment Area Walker, Sebrenik, Bosnia-Herzegovina.